



Ready for Ministry which God is Leading

A sense of belonging to a capital campaign that focused on much more than brick and mortar excited the people of Garden of Grace United Church of Christ in Columbia, SC, to vote unanimously to be a part of the UCC Southeast Conference's "Transforming Lives -- Transforming Churches." We did so after Pentecost Sunday covered-dish luncheon in May.

Garden of Grace realized, too, our own need to be ready for more ministry to which God is leading us. We decided to pursue a joint campaign. Our Bodacious Capital Campaign -- bold, remarkable, outstanding and audacious -- is combined with the conference campaign.

We plan to raise \$100,000 with a challenge goal of \$150,000 during the next five years. A fifth of that will go to Transforming Lives -- Transforming Churches. The rest will go to pay down our mortgage. We do not want our mortgage to hold us back from peace and justice ministries in our community and elsewhere.

In 2009 and 2010, we sent missionaries from our church to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota to repair homes. This led us to raise nearly \$30,000 both years in excess of our operating budget.

We want to be able to say our mortgage for our six-year-old celebration center is no obstacle for future ministries.

We launched our joint campaign on our 17th anniversary Sunday, Aug. 22, and our leaders alone pledged more than \$55,000. The first Transforming Churches -- Transforming Lives money will arrive at the end of September, which is also the month that we give birth to our baby, Jubilee! Circle United Church of Christ in northeastern Richland County. Nine months in the planning, this is a second Columbia-area UCC to be lead by our associate pastor -- now Jubilee's pastor -- the Rev. Candace Chellew-Hodge.

The goal of starting new churches is a strong one for us -- and we are grateful that this is part of Transforming Churches -- Transforming Lives. Quite frankly, we would be far less excited about a denominational headquarters building campaign.

We are honored to be a part of this exciting denomination and conference.

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